

Science Bowl
champions

Exceptional
Service awards

Fiber optics
feasibility

Mental
safety

CLOSED Circuit

WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION

AUGUST 2020

Demonstrating leadership





CLOSED Circuit

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On the cover

In August, Graphic Illustrator Joel Klassen joined his classic car club in a "social distancing cruise" past Ault Substation in Weld County, Colorado. (photo by Joel Klassen).



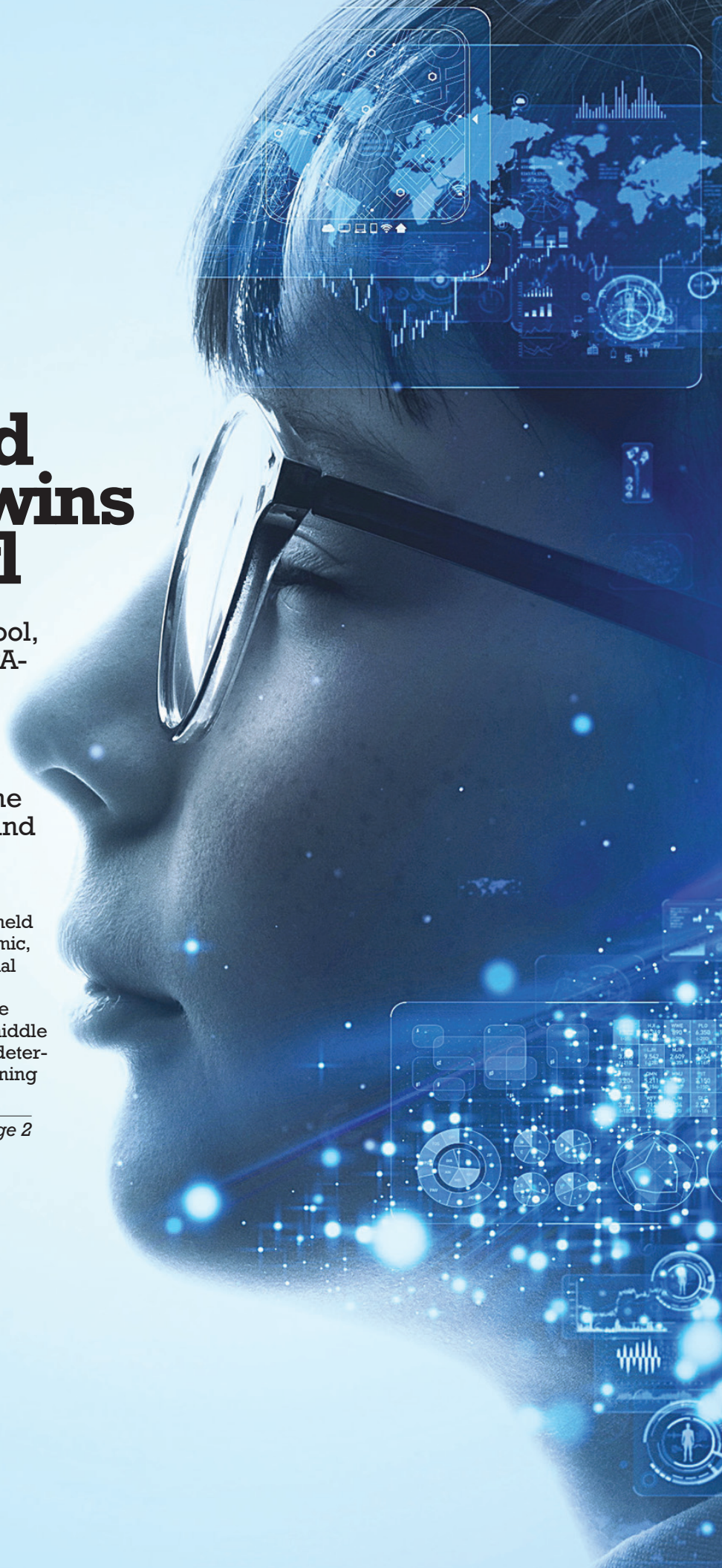
WAPA-hosted event team wins Science Bowl

Preston Middle School, winner of the WAPA-hosted Colorado Regional Middle School Science Bowl, took their science acuity to the National Science Bowl on June 5 and emerged as the national middle school champions.

The National Science Bowl is an annual event held in Washington, D.C. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, 2020 saw instead the first virtual National Science Bowl in the event's 30-year history.

The winners of regional events held across the country, a total of 61 high school teams and 41 middle school teams, squared off via teleconference to determine the winners of this unprecedented reimagining of the event.

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New times

Traditionally, the winning regional teams have enjoyed a trip to Washington, D.C., as part of their reward. Instead, the team had to find a new way to celebrate.

"We did have an ice cream party and students received certificates after qualifying for nationals, which was our last celebration in school," said Logan Burke, who coached the Preston team to victory. "It sounds like National Science Bowl might be planning something great for us next year!"

Not that celebrations were at the front of her mind. With the national competition looming – and a completely new format to boot – there was a lot of preparation necessary.

"Once we found out that the National Science Bowl was still being held, we began practicing again that week," said Burke. "We practiced virtually and tried to make our practices follow the competition format as closely as we could. We practiced how to answer questions and communicate with each other through Zoom. Each

of the team members also put in their own time to study."

It was also necessary to plan around the unique quirks of the format.

"It took some getting used to," she continued. "Instead of rushing to buzz in before the other team, we had to practice a new strategy of how to communicate very quickly and efficiently with each other."

One tweak to the format that reduced the stress of the moment was that each team would compete on its own; there would not be head-to-head situations in which another team could steal a point for a question that Preston students could have otherwise answered correctly.

"The goal remained to get the most questions correct possible," explained Burke, "but without the element of the other team stealing the question. We went through many question sets through Zoom in order to practice this way."

"I think the format made things a lot easier," said Jackson Dryg, one of the students on the Preston team. "Because there was no 'other team' present on

Zoom, we didn't have to worry about having faster reaction time; we just had to apply our knowledge. We could also quickly confer on all of the questions, which was a helpful change to the normal rules."

Dryg enjoys math, as well as playing and composing music, reading, writing "strange fiction" and learning about as much as he can.

His teammate Colin Magelky agreed with the ways in which the format made things a bit easier, but he also discussed other difficulties.

"The virtual format made it more difficult because we weren't able to get together as a team to practice or compete in person," he said, "so we had to get really efficient at communicating virtually. And we weren't just competing with one team at a time; we were being ranked, so we were competing with all teams at the same time."

Magelky's hobbies include reading, speedcubing, biking and technology. He is considering a career in biomedical engineering.



Coach Logan Burke, Logan Bowers, Quentin Perez-Wahl, Colin Magelky, Jackson Dryg and Kary Fang won the Colorado Regional Middle School Science Bowl in February. In June, they parlayed that into a win at the National Science Bowl.

Appropriate preparations

Whether the new format would ultimately make things easier or more difficult, the team had to be sure to prepare appropriately and practice as often as possible. Of course, even that practice was a bit different this time around: It was entirely online, both due to COVID-19 and to better prepare them for the virtual nature of the event.

"I would have preferred to be with the team in person, for sure," said Burke. "In our normal practices, the team usually has some downtime together and have all become great friends over the past couple of years. Online felt a bit more formal and lost some of the goofiness that practice usually has. The kids really rose to the occasion, though, and continued to study and practice, even weeks into their summer!"

"It was kind of odd working as a team while being physically distant," said Magelky. "We had to get used to dealing with technical difficulties such as audio issues, internet problems and video freezes. We also missed being able to hang out and have fun together."

"It was difficult to stay motivated and focused without seeing Jackson, Colin, Kary and Quentin almost every

day," said Logan Bowers. "It was easy to forget to study and practice."

Bowers enjoys reading, trombone, video games, hiking, camping and mountain biking. He is interested in working as an ecologist.

Kary Fang also noticed an understandable difference during practice sessions. "During practices, we were more dead and introverted than when we had practice at school," she said.

Fang's interests include table tennis, piano, cooking, traveling and puzzling. She plans to be a golf-ball diver for half of her time and "having fun as the rest of a career."

Showtime

By June, the team was as ready as it would ever be. The Preston students understood what the overall format would entail, at least in broad strokes, but it was impossible to fully prepare for whatever surprises might be in store.

"The virtual format was very different than it has been," said Burke. "Competing with only our team in the room for the highest score against all other teams completely changed our strategy. Communication was more important than ever."

Heading into the event, the students were not quite sure how they would perform.

"Since we've competed at the regional and national levels before, we knew how incredibly tough the competition is, and we didn't think we'd be able to win," said Magelky.

"I thought we had no real chance," agreed Dryg. "Our goal was to be in the top 16, and that seemed barely possible."

Fang, seeking precision, calculated Preston to have "like a 5% chance of winning."

Quentin Perez-Wahl explained the less-than-optimistic outlook. "Our whole team was basing our odds off of last year's National Science Bowl competition, where we did not make it that far," he said.

Perez-Wahl has ambitions of becoming an aerospace engineer. In his free time he enjoys skiing, gaming, taekwondo, panning for gold, biking, building model rockets and developing his micronation.

"We were at least hoping for top 16 so that we could get money for Preston's science department," he continued, "but we felt that would be still pretty unlikely."

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Technical troubles

Making a win seem even less likely were the unfortunate technical hiccups that come with teleconferences.

"The time limit tied us down," said Perez-Wahl. "Due to lag, five seconds where the judges were was not five seconds here in Fort Collins."

The National Science Bowl Administration anticipated issues of this kind, and so they allowed eight seconds for a response rather than five. The lag was often longer than expected, however.

"Sometimes it was even less than five seconds," Perez-Wahl said. "That really rushed us and made it harder to answer in time."

"Some technical difficulties with Zoom made the competition harder," Bowers agreed, "but other aspects, such as not competing in the same room as another team and being able to confer on tossup questions, made it significantly easier."

The timing problem also had its upside, however, with the team being given the benefit of the doubt in close calls. "For a lot of the questions, someone raised their hand at the same time the timer called 'time,'" Fang remembered. "But they still let us answer."

In spite of the difficulties, morale stayed high.

"It seemed almost as if we were still together at a table, answering questions like we would if the

National Science Bowl were still held in Washington, D.C.," Perez-Wahl said. "We still retained our sense of humor and did not lose our sense of teamwork."

As the event unfolded and Preston continued doing well, a first-place finish became a surprisingly realistic prospect.

"I did not think we would win," Bowers said flatly. "I was surprised we made the top 32, and I was more surprised every time we advanced further in the competition."

And yet they did keep advancing, until there was nowhere left to advance.

"I shouted a whole ton in my basement," Perez-Wahl said. "I got pretty stoked, realizing that we won."

Room at the top

Before they fully realized it, they'd made history as winners of the first virtual National Science Bowl. Of course, the pandemic made celebration a bit trickier than it would have otherwise been.

"After a long day of competition, I just celebrated by having boba tea with my family," said Magelky. Perez-Wahl did the same thing with homemade pudding.

Fang put her celebrations memorably: "I ate food and was forced to die in a table tennis lesson."

"We had a short Zoom meeting to celebrate as a team," Bowers said. Afterward his family celebrated by having dinner together. "I would have liked to have competed the way teams normally do, but I am glad that I participated in a competition so different from prior ones."

"It feels pretty cool to have won along with my teammates," said Perez-Wahl. "It was really fun to be able to demonstrate my knowledge of new concepts that I have learned this year at practice in a fun and competitive way with many others from across the nation."

For Dryg, the experience still feels like a dream. "I'm still in numb disbelief about the whole thing," he said.

As the 2020 National Champions, the Preston Middle School team members will be invited to attend the 2021 National Finals as special guests and will be recognized in the 2021 Awards Ceremony.

Burke, who coached the students to their historic victory, could not be more proud of their work. "This team worked so hard for their accomplishment," she said. "They deserve it!"

High school runners up

Preston's was not the only impressive finish by a WAPA-hosted event winner; Mira Loma High School, winners of the Sacramento Regional High School Science Bowl, took second place among high school competitors. This team consisted of Vishwa Akkati, Nipun Dour, Albert Qin, Achyuta Ramesh and Rohan Shelke, competing under Coach James Hill.

"Congratulations to this year's National Science Bowl winners from Dougherty Valley High School and Preston Middle School," said Secretary of Energy Dan Brouillette, announcing the results. "Your dedication and commitment to this challenging competition in this unprecedented time speaks volumes to your level of determination and integrity. I have the utmost confidence that all of this year's National Science Bowl participants are up to the great task of ensuring American leadership in science, technology and innovation for generations to come." □

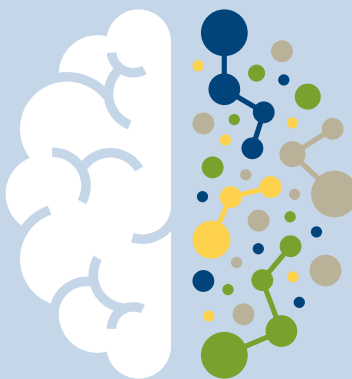
The deciding question

Dougherty Valley High School of San Ramon, California, defeated Mira Loma High School of Sacramento, California, by answering this question correctly:

Scientists at Ames Lab are studying twisted bilayer graphene. Identify all of the following three statements that are true of this material:

- 1) It can act as an insulator.
- 2) It can act as a superconductor.
- 3) It demonstrates a Moiré pattern.

Answer: All three statements are true of twisted bilayer graphene.



Exceptional employees honored



Every year, Administrator and CEO **Mark A. Gabriel** honors standout employees with Exceptional Service Awards. The ESAs recognize those who excel in technical competency, enthusiasm, innovation and commitment to bettering themselves and WAPA.

"ESAs distinguish those who consistently go above and beyond, model WAPA's core values and provide exceptional service to WAPA and its customers," said Gabriel in his announcement. "Receiving an ESA is a once-in-a-career recognition that exemplifies outstanding service, initiative and integrity."

All ESA nominations are submitted by employees and peers. Here are the winners for 2020.

HEADQUARTERS

AMY CUTLER Organizational Project Manager

Amy Cutler has demonstrated excellence in performance and leadership in project management, continuous improvement and asset management. She is the project manager for the Southwest Power Pool Western Energy Imbalance Service implementation project, which is on schedule for a February 2021 implementation.



The WEIS involves coordinating efforts with staff from three regions and a project management team from SPP. She led the WAPA-wide Organizational Approach to Markets project, completing Phase 1 ahead of schedule, and has put considerable effort into evaluating the OAM Phase 2 recommendations and preparing project plans for start dates after market decisions and implementation.

Cutler completed her Continuous Process Improvement green belt by leading the Salt Lake City office relocation. She also led the project for retrofitting a warehouse in Page, Arizona. This critical and complex project, involving both WAPA and the Bureau of Reclamation, demonstrated her ability to work with diverse groups across multiple organizations. The estimated cost avoidance from this effort for both organizations was \$5 million when compared to building a new facility. She also provided project management for the Transformer Acquisition Strategy Project and the Power Repayment Study upgrade project.

Cutler has completed the certified Change Management course and is a change agent instructor throughout WAPA. She was a member of the Project Management Advisory Group and is a member of the Inclusion, Innovation and Technology Committee and the Inclusion and Diversity Committee.

DESERT SOUTHWEST

ROY FREEMAN Foreman II Protection & Communication

Roy Freeman is recognized across WAPA as an expert in all areas of Protection, Metering & Relaying, communications equipment and remote terminal units. He is an integral part of ensuring that the organization's standards for communication and protection are maintained.



He has continually gone above and beyond in maintaining and commissioning projects. He's been involved with the development of project scope, design and installation requirements for the DSW Communications "backbone" and protection systems. Freeman is also a pioneer in the implementation of improved technologies to increase the reliability of WAPA's power system.

Freeman is both innovative and a by-the-book foreman who does not allow convenience to interfere with safety and procedure. If he sees something wrong, he has no problem stopping the work and having it redone the proper way. He has established himself as the point of contact for many customers and organizations by sharing his ideas, setting the example and always offering a helping hand.

He has provided outstanding leadership by demonstrating daily his ability to listen, to understand issues and concerns, to pass on his knowledge and to coach and mentor other employees. Freeman is well known for providing responsive support for field crews and is willing to drop whatever he is doing to help others. His experience, knowledge, professionalism and work ethic have enabled him to earn the trust and confidence of others.

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ROCKY MOUNTAIN

ED HUNT Foreman III Lineman

Ed Hunt has worked in the electric utility industry for nearly 37 years, with 28 of those spent at WAPA. He is recognized as an industry leader and a subject matter expert who has made significant contributions to WAPA, the electric utility industry and the craft as a whole.



Hunt is constantly driven to do better. He promotes the highest degree of improvement, efficiency, safety and responsibility. He implemented the first pilot of the Craft Leadership Development Program in Rocky Mountain in 2008 and served on the steering committee that formalized the WAPA-wide program in 2013. He has served as co-chair of the Fall Protection Committee and is a member of the Accident Investigation Team. He has worked on national disaster response teams, such as in the wake of Hurricane Sandy.

His leadership extends well beyond WAPA. He holds leadership roles on industry standards and research committees. Through the contribution of his expertise and his advocacy for the crafts in these forums, he elevates WAPA's standing in the industry.

Hunt has pushed for the research and development of tools, methods and resources for lineman who perform live-line work. He has worked extensively with the Electric Power Research Institute and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers to develop reference guides and industry standards for live-line tools. He also contributed to EPRI's "Tan Book," the industry live-line work reference guide.

SIERRA NEVADA

ROSEMARY JONES Power Marketing & Energy Services Specialist

Rosemary Jones started at WAPA in 1997 as an Information Technology contractor. In this role she worked with the help desk, systems technology, networking technology and eventually supervisory control and data acquisition. She was hired as a federal employee in 2004, and her first project was running IT quality control for 13 brand-new systems being implemented in support of WAPA's marketing plan.



She later served as the merchant lead for the implementation of the California Independent System Operator Market Redesign. In 2012, she became settlement supervisor, where she was instrumental in the implementation of both phases of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Order 764 and recovered more than \$5 million in erroneous charges through years of good-faith negotiations with CAISO.

Jones served a detail in Upper Great Plains to set up their power settlements team and develop new processes in preparation for their joining the Southwest Power Pool. She also served on various teams during the Organizational Approach to Markets project in 2017, keeping track of documentation, maintaining schedules and facilitating meetings.

In 2018 Rosemary took on the role of Real Time Merchant Team Lead. That summer she found herself on the front line with the merchants during the Carr Fire, where in the first 24 hours powerplants lost over half of their generation capacity due to loss of transmission. She worked to restore federal hydropower service to affected customers for the next two weeks.

HEADQUARTERS

JAMES PHILLIPS Vice President of IT – SCADA

James Phillips has served WAPA in a number of capacities for more than 17 years. As the Upper Great Plains supervisory control and data acquisition infrastructure supervisor, he implemented the first known split-site virtualization platform in a SCADA environment, achieving unprecedented SCADA resilience for UGP's Operations and Balancing Authority functions.

As UGP's regional information officer, Phillips led an initiative to ensure metering and network readiness for Southwest Power Pool market integration. As a vice president of Information Technology, his team established the Secure Enclave Support Center, a segregated network for substation maintenance and cybersecurity activities. The SESC greatly diminishes cybersecurity and compliance risks for WAPA, allowing for secure maintenance and monitoring of critical substation infrastructure. In his current role, Phillips has established the framework for WAPA to achieve a common architecture and environment across WAPA's SCADA environments.

Phillips has demonstrated the leadership competencies necessary to bring diverse IT teams together in a manner that allows WAPA to remain agile and adaptable during times of unprecedented industry change.

Phillips also recognizes the importance of a diverse workforce and went the extra mile to draw in talented individuals through the Department of Energy's summer intern program. He has exhibited great discipline in ensuring the foundation of WAPA's IT organization is solidly in place to meet future demands.



UPPER GREAT PLAINS

DIRK SHULUND Project Manager

During his time at WAPA, Dirk Shulund has provided timely and effective project management of many complex interconnection requests and other projects. His contributions were critical to the successful transition of UGP's Generation Interconnection queue into the Southwest Power Pool, which was essential to allowing UGP to successfully join SPP in 2015.

Shulund successfully anticipated, coordinated and addressed issues related to the transition of UGP into SPP, including GI coordination, crediting issues, transition of GI requests, updates to GI agreements, coordination of studies with SPP and customers and more. His expert leadership and project-management skills under tight deadlines were demonstrated in the Garrison-to-Snake Creek 115-kilovolt addition project. Most recently, Shulund has managed the complex Keystone XL Pipeline interconnections project.

Numerous customers have expressed their sincere appreciation for his crucial leadership skills and efforts that contributed to successful projects over the years. He has always responded expertly and flexibly to tough issues that arose, such as different approaches, tight schedules and unexpected issues.

Shulund has also sought to contribute to WAPA's success in broader ways, such as in his administrative officer detail to Desert Southwest. He has always gone above and beyond in his willingness to dedicate additional time to projects, above his normal duty, to meet deadlines. He creates an environment of teamwork and has fostered extraordinary cooperation between functional areas, external partners and customers.



Engineer recognized as emerging leader

In late June, Electrical Engineer **Jackie Brusoe** received the Emerging Leader Award from RMEL – formerly the Rocky Mountain Electrical League – in Denver, Colorado.

“The Emerging Leader Award is RMEL’s opportunity to recognize new talent in the industry from RMEL’s member companies,” said RMEL Executive Director Richard J. Putnicki in his announcement. “The award honors RMEL members with five to 10 years of industry experience who are making an impact through significant contributions within their organization and the electric energy industry.”

“Jackie approaches every project, task and assignment the same way: She considers every stakeholder, lays out a plan, then gives 100%. Every project, every time,” said Supervisory Electrical Engineer **John Quintana**, who nominated Brusoe for the award. “Nominating Jackie for this recognition was one of the easiest and most obvious decisions I ever had to make.”

His praise did not end there.

“Jackie has been a strong supporter of RMEL, as shown by delivering presentations at several events, including the 2018 Asset Management Conference, and again at the 2017 Transmission Operations and Maintenance conference,” he continued. “Jackie has also volunteered her time, supporting RMEL fundraisers at the Colorado Rockies fundraising events. I am certain that Jackie will continue her participation and support of RMEL activities in the future.”

Closed Circuit sat down with Brusoe to discuss the award.



Tell us a little bit about your background and what ultimately brought you to WAPA.

I completed my bachelor's and master's degrees in civil engineering in 1997 and started my career in the oil and gas industry. Several years later I switched gears and left the workforce to raise kids, teaching night school on the side.

I reentered the workforce in 2010 when I hired on at Colorado Springs Utilities. In 2016 I was looking for a change and was drawn to WAPA, both for the organization's reputation and the opportunity to do maintenance program management. I'm so happy here; I love the work I get to do and the people I get to work with.

How does it feel to be recognized this way by RMEL?

Our industry is full of highly capable professionals, and to be selected for this award totally blows my mind. I am both honored and humbled. I am very grateful for the opportunities I have at WAPA to spread my wings.

What has been your experience working with RMEL?

I started attending RMEL events in 2010. I was a new utility engineer and their educational sessions were key in helping me get up to speed. What I love about RMEL is that the topics are both timely and relevant, and there is always a tangible takeaway from their events.

Of what accomplishment are you most proud?

I never thought I would get an award like this, so this is really the tops for me. Before this, though, a big accomplishment for me was getting my engineer's license. I hit my experience requirement for testing at a very chaotic time in my personal life, but I knew that if I put it off until a "better" time, it may not happen at all.

Also, engineering did not come easily to me, so I spent many nights and weekends preparing for the eight-hour test. I will never forget the joy I felt when I opened the envelope with the test results. I lacked a lot of confidence while in college and early in my career, and this helped me feel more legitimate.

As an active member of the Inclusion, Innovation and Technology Committee, how important do you see those three topics when it comes to leadership?

Inclusion and innovation are tied at the hip. Building a diverse team and incorporating inclusive practices creates a space in which people feel both safe and heard, which leads to the free exchange of ideas. I think a key responsibility of a leader is enabling your team to perform, and if you want innovation, you'd better be practicing inclusion.

Has your experience with the I2T Committee and I2T Summit shaped your approach to leadership at all? If so, how?

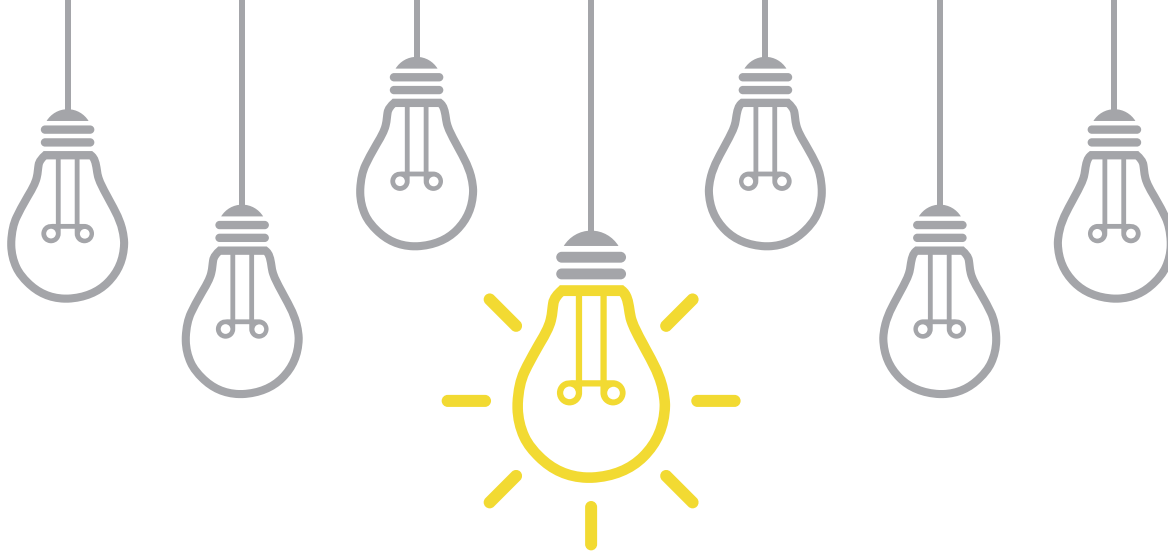
My work with the 2019 Summit and current I2T Team has been a stretch assignment for sure. I2T at WAPA is wholly volunteer, so these efforts can only come to fruition when employees carve out time to make it happen. I feel a great responsibility to direct their efforts toward maximum benefit while requiring minimum effort. This experience has also included figuring out how to communicate upward more effectively, as there is great interest and support for I2T at the senior leadership level.

What is one piece of advice you have for WAPA employees wishing to grow and develop as leaders?

I think leadership is all about attitude and behavior, not position or title. You can be a leader now. There's no need to wait for a program to accept you or for that position to come along. Ask for an opportunity that gives you a chance to try it out. As you give it a try, enlist the help of someone you look up to for ideas and advice.

Are there any other thoughts you would like to share with readers?

Working at WAPA has been a game changer for me. I am beyond grateful for the opportunities I have had to do meaningful work in partnership with such excellent people. □



Building a Leadership Development Program

In February, WAPA launched its Leadership Development Program. The LDP was developed by the Leadership Development Taskforce, itself created in response to feedback received through the culture assessment and Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, which indicated interest in WAPA increasing its investment in leadership development.

Serving both current and future leaders, the LDP was temporarily headed up by Financial Program Analyst **Brittanie Paquette**, whose detail with the group will continue through October. On July 8, the LDP welcomed Program Manager **Troy Steadman** as the first leadership development program manager.

Steadman previously worked as a Human Resources specialist with the Bureau of Reclamation. His focus was on training, leadership and employee development, making him a natural fit for LDP manager.

"I have passion and enthusiasm for leadership development," said Steadman. "I also have a wide range of communication, training and leadership development experience."

At Reclamation, Steadman worked with six regional training officers to implement the organization's employee-development programs. He also developed and led a structured assessment process to identify the best candidates for Reclamation's own competitive leadership development program.

"Troy is passionate about leadership development and earned a reputation

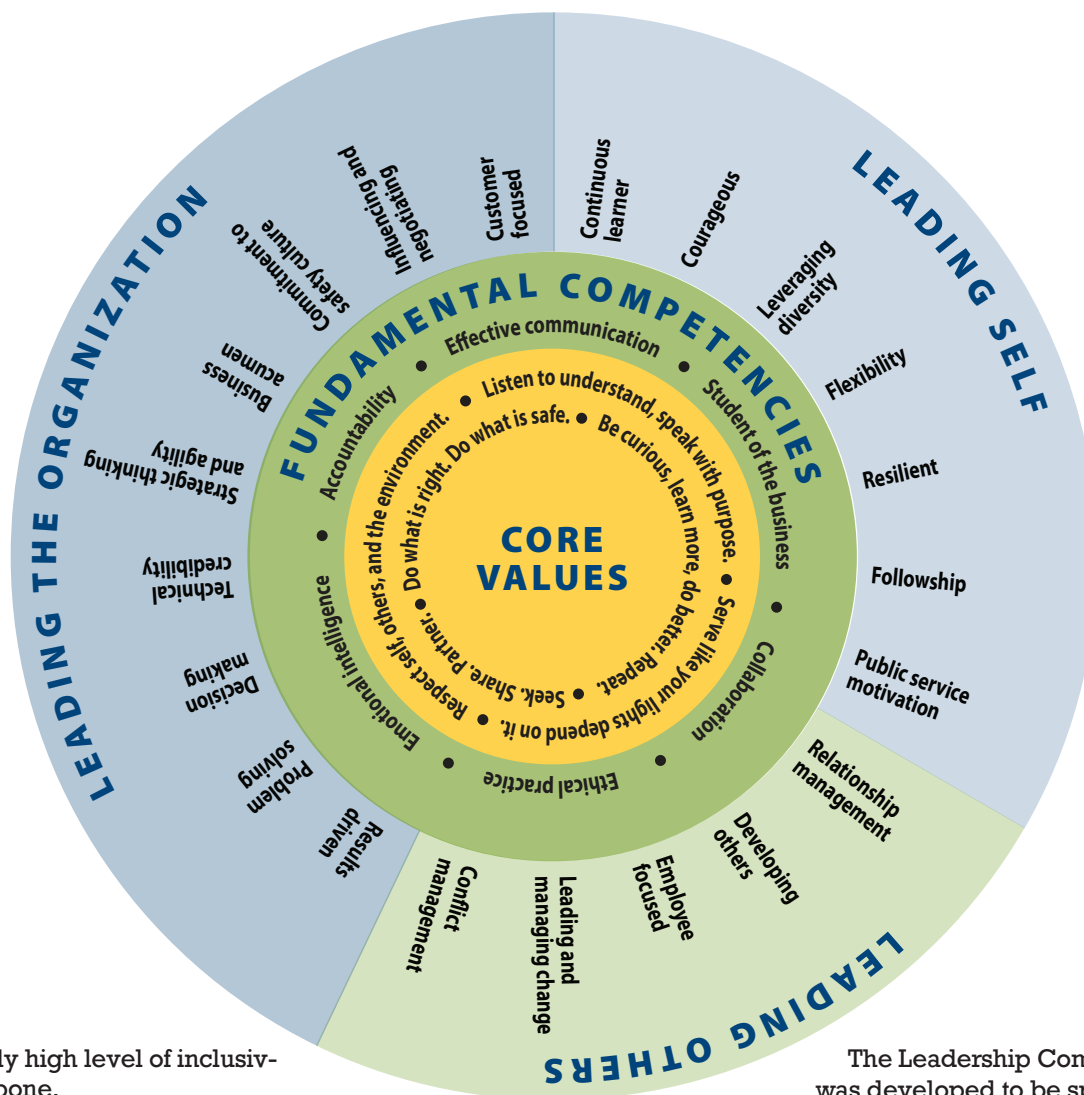
at Reclamation for strong crossregional collaboration," said Chief Strategy Officer **Jennifer Rodgers** in her announcement.

Steadman will lead the program as it grows and defines itself as one of WAPA's important pathways to potential advancement.

"I am excited to be able to build on the foundational work already done here," Steadman said. "Huge shoutout to Brittanie and to the leadership development taskforce! I am also excited to take our leadership programs to the next level."

"WAPA's Leadership Development Program is an example of employees' voices being heard," Paquette said. "The Leadership Development Taskforce presented a roadmap and framework for what a Leadership Development Program would look like, and WAPA's Senior Leadership Team supported the idea."

The Leadership Development Taskforce consisted of members representing each region, Headquarters and all functional groups across WAPA. This ensured that the eventual LDP would



have a similarly high level of inclusivity as its backbone.

The end result of having a functional LDP was one that took months of planning and careful consideration on behalf of the Leadership Development Taskforce. That team spent several months researching and identifying leadership development best practices from the electric utility and government industries, as well as several private organizations.

By the time they had their proposal complete and received approval from the SLT, it was late 2018.

“We are very excited to be able to bring this program to life,” continued Paquette.

In May, the LDP offered its inaugural Leadership Culture at WAPA course, consisting of four morning sessions.

“This course was designed to help employees within their first year at WAPA understand the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of the organization,” Paquette explained. “We plan to offer this course again in October. It will be held on a recurring basis as a cornerstone of the Leadership Development Program.”

Also within its first months of activity, the LDP has published the Leadership Competency Model and the Leadership Competency Model Guide on its *myWAPA* website.

WAPA's Leadership Development Program aims to:

- Cultivate learning and leadership by developing authentic leaders who embody WAPA's core values and leadership competencies.
- Advance effectiveness and ensure mission success.
- Create opportunities that enable employee potential.
- Develop the current and next generation of leaders.
- Attract and retain top talent.



The Leadership Competency Model was developed to be specific to WAPA and illustrates the desired competencies for employees in all areas of the organization.

“The model is a great way to get a sense of your strengths and opportunities as an employee and, potentially, as a leader,” said Paquette. “I’d encourage all employees to take a look at the website content. There’s something for everyone to learn.”

In the near future, the LDP is planning to provide WAPA-wide training on the model.

“We are going to have some great offerings throughout the remainder of this year,” concluded Paquette. “Check out the LDP website for up-to-date information on courses and resources. We’re here to help you develop your leadership skills and continue to unlock your potential.” □

Visit the Leadership Development Program page at *myWAPA*, Programs, Leadership Development.



DOE leadership program chooses participants

In July, five WAPA employees were selected to participate in the Department of Energy's Leadership Development Program, sponsored by the University of Maryland.

The eight-month program is a career-development opportunity designed for new and existing leaders. It focuses on strategic alignment across all leadership levels to drive transparency and accountability throughout the DOE. During the program, participants will develop critical leadership skills and improve their leadership competency proficiencies.

Closed Circuit reached out to the selected employees for their thoughts on the opportunity.



Human Resources Specialist

ALLISON BURNETT

I am excited to have been chosen to participate in the DOE Leadership Development program! I am always looking for ways to learn and grow both within my organization and within the DOE. I am hoping to learn more about what being a leader means within DOE and within myself. I am looking forward to expanding my communication and collaboration across the organization and meeting new people.

Information Technology Web Architect

VITALIY DEMCHUK

I would like to have a meaningful career in the federal government, and I hope the program will enhance my leadership skills and help me with my career goals. I also hope the program will give me a clear insight into what effective leadership is all about and how to practice impactful leadership on a daily basis. I look forward to meeting people in person and learning from them.

Information Technology Specialist

CORINNA GONZALEZ

My personal goal for the program is to gain leadership knowledge from the instructors. I hope to acquire guidance on leading people through positive changes while also building a stronger team. My objectives are to gain skills and knowledge to build upon my leadership capability on the WAPA network engineer team. My long-term goal is to lead

positive change within WAPA as an IT manager and senior leader. I look forward to meeting the other training participants who are already in management roles and gathering their personal insights and experiences about leadership.

Human Resources Specialist

COURTNI HIVELY

I have chosen to apply for this program because of its exceptional reputation. I also like the fact that this program uses multiple avenues of approach that reinforce learning and strengthen the commitment of future leaders. I hope this program gives me a new perspective on how to develop relationships with leaders on a higher level and strengthen my business acumen. Overall, I want to walk away from this program as a better me, with stronger leadership and problem-solving skills. I look forward to collaborating with other DOE professionals and gaining a wealth of knowledge from my cohorts.


Safety and Occupational Health Manager

KRYSTALL VALENCIA

It is important to have effective communication skills and be a discerning listener. As our core value says, "Listen to understand, speak with purpose." I applied for this program because it is an opportunity for continued growth in skills, knowledge and competencies which are indispensable for a successful leader. I am honored to be selected and am looking forward to the development events, action-learning projects and team coaching.

Fiber optics feasibility assessment published

By Eric Barendsen



On July 22, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Electricity and Southwestern Power Administration, WAPA published a report exploring the feasibility of leasing currently unlit fiber optic strands, also known as "dark" fiber, to the power marketing administrations' customers or third parties.

In support of the Administration's American Broadband Initiative, the *Fiber Optics Feasibility Assessment: Western Area Power Administration and Southwestern Power Administration* examines the risks and opportunities of providing broadband internet services using WAPA's and SWPA's existing transmission and fiber optics infrastructure.

"WAPA supports exploring the potential for expanded use of its unallocated fiber while remaining committed to protecting customer investments," said Administrator and CEO **Mark A. Gabriel**. "We will ensure that any fiber partnerships do not impact our mission of delivering power in a reliable, resilient, cost-based and secure manner."

With the publication of the report, WAPA will embark on a pilot project with three of its existing power customers in California and Colorado to

examine potential fiber partnerships that facilitate the customers' fiber needs and fit within WAPA's statutory mission and authorities.

WAPA remains committed to ensuring that the beneficiary of fiber services is responsible for paying any related costs.

WAPA owns, operates and maintains about 5,000 miles of overhead fiber optic ground wire on its transmission system to communicate with its electric equipment across eleven states. Some of the fiber is uncommitted, leaving some capacity unused.

The feasibility assessment stems from the American Broadband Initiative Milestones Report, released in February 2019, which detailed the

Administration's strategy to identify and remove barriers to broadband access and leverage public assets and resources to expand America's broadband infrastructure capacity.

WAPA sought input from its customers during the development of the report and found that customers support WAPA's current fiber partnership practice of making dark fiber available for electric utility use. Customers were also cautiously interested in other fiber uses, such as broadband internet service. Some of the potential benefits they identified included augmenting rural customer revenues, advancing WAPA's network capabilities while improving the resilience of WAPA's transmission system, and strengthening communication systems for rural emergency services and healthcare providers.

"In this dynamic energy frontier, WAPA must continuously evaluate how it can best support its customers now and in the future," said Gabriel. □

Note: Barendsen is a public affairs specialist.

View the complete report at wapa.gov/newsroom/Publications/Documents/Fiber_Optics_Feasibility_Assessment.pdf





Making great Knowledge Management videos

By John Flynt

In recent years, the Knowledge Management program has worked with teams, programs, departments and individuals to produce videos that employees throughout WAPA have viewed tens of thousands of times. These videos are intended to both address knowledge loss when people leave or retire, and help all employees benefit from the valuable expertise WAPA has throughout its organization.

Employees watch the videos because the mentors featured in them provide help with tasks, problems and issues that others find challenging. Watching a few of these videos makes it very clear just how much every employee contributes to WAPA's success.

A KM mentor may also be referred to as a "go-to person." Picture Superman or Wonder Woman and you won't completely miss the mark when it comes to KM go-to persons.

One is Reliability Compliance Management Specialist **Kim Bentley**, who made a video on psychological safety.

Among other things, psychological safety refers to how safe or unsafe employees feel when they want to

tell other employees they believe something is wrong. Bentley's video, "Engage, Speak and Listen – The Power of Psychological Safety," had its origin in a presentation she gave at Headquarters in Lakewood, Colorado.

She spoke in the dead of winter, just after the conclusion of an All-Employee Meeting, to a group of 15 employees who had stayed on site despite weather advisories. What she had to say was, to say the least, spell-binding, and after working with KM to make a video, her presentation has now been viewed nearly 800 times.

Another go-to person is Electrical Engineer **Jackie Brusoe**. Following a brief discussion of the Inclusion, Innovation and Technology Summit at an AEM in early 2020, Brusoe worked

with KM on a video to help employees become more at ease making and receiving I2T nominations.

The video offered a short history of I2T and examples of nominations and winning projects over the past few years. Packing an enormous amount of information into less than 20 minutes, the video provided WAPA employees with stories that were both humorous and impressive. Nearly a hundred employees viewed the video the first week, and Brusoe soon received a little help from Public Affairs Specialist **Philip Reed**, who provided links to previous *Closed Circuit* articles to complement the video in the KM I2T classroom.

In the face of a hard-pressed deadline and the looming shadow of COVID-19, Brusoe's video helped her team to receive the largest number of I2T Award nominations yet: 39 compared to the previous year's high of 14.

So what is it that makes a great KM video?

Bentley and Brusoe show that ideas passionately pursued but still completely within the everyday scope of WAPA operations make for popular and valuable videos. Since KM takes care of the production, go-to people concentrate on speaking about what

they know and do, and this is where winning videos start. KM asks mentors to imagine that a fellow employee has stopped by their office to ask how something works. As the success of Bentley and Brusoe demonstrates, the value begins with the sincerity and focus of their response.

Persistence over the course of a year also accounts for good videos. This is the case with Reliability Compliance Management Specialist **Al Slucher**, who in good Superman fashion made more than 30 hour-long presentations on the Critical Infrastructure Protection standards WAPA must meet to satisfy audits conducted by the Western Electricity Coordinating Council.

As Slucher explained, his effort began when Supervisory Information Technology Specialist **Tim Weathers** asked for help understanding CIP. Weathers went to Slucher for a reason: the endless knowledge of a go-to person. From there, with a little help from KM, Slucher set up a model presentation, which he repeated many times over, addressing successive subjects and always improving using feedback from participants. Slucher's efforts mark a first for WAPA: a prolonged miniature YouTube that goes one better because it features updates that continuously improve CIP knowledge of employees across WAPA.

In the Super Team area, an example of an outstanding video production is to be found in Fiscal Operations. Supervisory Financial Analyst **Neilia Abban**, Financial Manager **Traci Albright**, Fiscal Specialist **Carolyn Burg**, Program Specialist **Rhonda Frakes**, Fiscal Specialist **Jessica Gullatte**, Accounting Technician **Daniel Hoellein** and Accounting Technician **Donna White** have managed to achieve what might be another first for WAPA. In a set of around 40 videos produced with KM, they traced essential processes that equip members of their team to accomplish the work of Fiscal Operations.

The benefits start with onboarding. With the videos, in one month Fiscal Operations employees can reach levels of competence that used to take a year, in addition to a lot of worn carpet between offices. In this effort, success lies in zeal, dedication and skill that experienced employees of WAPA pack into a team-developed video library that can be instantly accessed.

Other benefits include standardization and iterative improvement. If everyone is learning the same approach to fundamental tasks, everyone can move forward as a team as improvements are introduced, from the same baseline.

Change is hard, and anyone who can facilitate change is a candidate for producing successful videos. One significant recent wave of change is the WAPA-wide IT Modern Workplace.

This constitutes one of the most extensive technological upgrades in WAPA's history. The idea that KM videos could address Modern Workplace changes began with IT Project Manager **Denise Elkin**, project manager for the Modern Workplace rollout. After consulting with Management and Program Analyst **Leah Shapiro**, Denise called on KM to work with her, System Administrator **Pattie Musk**, System Administrator **Shea Knorr** and IT Trainer **Jennifer Quynn** to quickly produce videos to address a succession of Office 365 innovations to help employees make changes involving browser, laptop and smart device interactions.

The resulting videos complement the WAYS knowledge base to bring both technical support and general technology users comprehensive learning resources. Another WAPA

first: The videos built on a combination of a project manager's insights and the superior responsiveness and experience of WAPA's IT personnel.

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged employees to adopt new work practices. The opening days of April were crucial. New KM videos were needed immediately. Although the effort was the brainchild of Management and Program Analyst **Stacey Decker** and a Change Management team effort, Management Analyst **Jen Neville** and Vice President of Transmission Service **Pete Heiman** were on deck with a first-time-ever two-day presentation recorded by KM and shared by hundreds on how to stay calm, make changes and continue working in the face of a viral crisis. Neville and Heiman made a set of videos titled Individual Transition in Organizations so on-point that it would be adopted soon afterward by the Learning Nucleus.

What makes a great video? The answer is really pretty basic. What makes a great colleague? It's what you, as a mentor, a go-to person, can show others.

If you pause for just a moment, you will be able to recognize that tasks you perform in a few minutes can take days or weeks of effort from others. If you share what you know, in addition to getting the recognition you deserve, you also increase WAPA's flexibility to respond to challenges and opportunities.

You yourself, with what you know right now, are likely to be all that is needed for a great video. □

Note: Flynt is a technical writer who works under the Wyandotte Services contract.

If you have ideas for a Knowledge Management video, contact flynt@wapa.gov



View Knowledge Management classrooms on a wealth of subjects at [myWAPA](#), Programs, Knowledge Management, Knowledge Paths with Classrooms





Stay mentally safe during the pandemic

By Paul Robbins

How long has it been? Five months? Six? Maybe you have lost track or stopped counting altogether.

If you are tired and frustrated with the COVID-19 pandemic, now is the time to concentrate more on what you are doing. This is because exhaustion and frustration are distractions that typically lead to mental lapses, errors and injuries.

Since the pandemic started, we have all heard our share about ways to preserve our physical safety, such as social distancing, wearing masks and handwashing. But what about mental safety? Whether you have returned to work, are preparing to return or are still working from home, your mental safety is important.

Safe Actions for Employee Returns

Also known as SAFER, the Safe Actions for Employee Returns program, sponsored by the National Safety Council, addresses several

topics related to mental health and returning to work during the pandemic. It starts by recognizing that mental safety is just as important as physical safety.

Isolation

Social isolation, especially when extended, can increase risk factors related to mental health and wellness. These include poor sleep, depression, suicidal thoughts, impaired thought and alcohol and substance abuse.

One of the best ways to cope with isolation is staying connected with coworkers, family and friends. Being connected increases resilience and protects against mental crisis. Reach out to coworkers, especially those who live alone. Help protect them and yourself from isolation at the same time through personal communication.



For more information on SAFER, visit nsc.org, Work Safety, Safe Actions for Employee Returns (SAFER)

Make a phone call or use the Skype for Business feature on your computer.

During this pandemic, verbal dialogue is the next best thing to face-to-face interaction and can be more meaningful than an email or text.

Fear

For months, we have been bombarded by the dangers of this pandemic, while fearing for the health of ourselves and loved ones. It is mentally exhausting and traumatic.

Anxiety, fear and uncertainty can be fertile grounds upon which mental health issues grow. Accept not having all the answers or being in total control of the situation. Keep yourself grounded and in the moment, concentrate on what you are doing, practice situational awareness and avoid distractions. These actions will divert your mind from fear and anxiety, while also protecting your mental and physical safety.

Pandemic processing

Everyone processes life events differently. Some figure out what to do quickly; others take more time or even delay the process. It is important to understand that everybody around us will experience and process this pandemic differently.

These different states of mind may cause various levels of mental distraction, which can lead to errors and injury. We must watch out for ourselves and for each other, especially those who perform high-risk jobs.

Other precautions can also be helpful such as self-checking work, establishing a buddy-check system or

addressing project-specific hazards during tailgate meetings or Job Hazard Analysis briefings.

Management and safety culture

Managers and supervisors play important parts in promoting a comprehensive culture including mental, psychological, emotional and physical safety. This is achieved through leading by example and incorporating safety into every process through communications and training.

Leadership in turn benefits by building a stronger workforce with positive attributes, such as improved attitudes, productivity and employee participation.

A well-rounded safety culture also decreases burnout, absenteeism and healthcare costs because stress and poor mental health affect physical health. These health effects include hypertension, cardiovascular conditions, diabetes and injuries.

The benefits and strengths of an inclusive safety culture are results of management caring about employees. Whether it is discussion about reducing social isolation while teleworking or decreasing anxiety when returning to work, it is all about establishing a culture of trust, support and empowerment for everyone involved.

Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program was created to support employees and management in developing an empowered workplace.

In addition to mental safety and personal health, the EAP provides helpful information on a variety of top-

ics including workplace productivity, overcoming loss, dealing with stress, improving communication, life management, parenting skills and more.

The program also offers short-term confidential counseling to employees during challenging times like this. If you need to talk, there is a specially trained professional who is ready to help and just a phone call away.

For more information on EAP:

- Call **800.869.0276** 24/7 for toll-free assistance.
- Log in to espyr.com/sign-in with the password **DOEFEDEA**



Focus on healthy habits

Sometimes it's the little things that make a difference. These include taking care of yourself by exercising, getting enough sleep and eating right. These activities will help alleviate stress and keep you balanced.

Also, take time for yourself. Turn off the media noise, take a walk, read a book, listen to music or do anything that relaxes your mind and body.

Mental safety is just as important as physical safety, and both are closely linked. If mental safety is compromised by distraction, physical safety may be jeopardized. During this pandemic, focus on what you are doing, watch out for others and protect your mental safety. □

Note: Robbins is a technical writer who works under the Cherokee Nation Strategic Programs contract.

Mask photo contest deadline Aug. 18

The annual WAPA photography contest returns, this time with a twist: We are looking for photos of you in your favorite protective mask!

Whether in the field, going about your day or showing off your phenomenal sense of style, send us a photo of yourself responsibly wearing a protective face mask. This is an excellent opportunity to show off the “new normal” of your work environment in a supportive and fun way.

Be creative and show us your commitment to keeping yourself, your family and your fellow citizens healthy and safe through the pandemic.

How to enter

Submit your photos in .jpg or .png format to publicaffairs@wapa.gov with the subject line “Photo Contest.” In the email, provide your name, the photographer’s name and a very brief description of the photo and where it was taken.

Guidelines

- The contest is open to all federal and contract WAPA employees.
- Protective masks in the photo must be acceptable for wearing in public to mitigate for the pandemic.
- Employees may submit more than one photo.
- Do not crop, edit or resize your photos before sending.
- Safety is far more important than a good photo! Always be conscious of your environment and follow all appropriate safety and security protocols when taking your pictures.



Deadline

Photos will be accepted through Aug. 18.

Winners

The winners will be revealed at WAPA’s town hall meeting on Aug. 27.

The top three winners will receive gift cards to Noodles & Company, courtesy of the WAPA Employees’ Association. The top 10 winners will be featured in an upcoming issue of *Closed Circuit* and shared through WAPA’s social media channels.

Judging

Public Affairs employees will serve as judges for the contest. As judges, employees of Public Affairs are not eligible to win.

Disclaimer

Submitted photos may also be used for other WAPA publications and on social media. By submitting a photo you agree to its potential use in other WAPA-sanctioned outlets. Each photo will be credited to its photographer.

Reboot computer twice per week

As WAPA continues to operate in this maximum telework environment, it is important that employees reboot their computers at least once per week and ideally twice. Information Technology recommends rebooting your computer at the end of your workday.

Rebooting helps resolve many common issues and is important for optimal computer performance. Rebooting regularly helps clear up and prevent many issues, saving employees time from potentially having to reboot in the middle of a workday.

Among other benefits, rebooting flushes a computer’s random-access memory, frees up space, fixes internet problems, fixes bugs and fixes issues of which users may not even be aware.



For more information regarding the importance of rebooting, see the *myWAPA* news item “Reboot computers once, twice a week.”



2020 Leadership Council Summit opening remarks available

Administrator and CEO Mark A. Gabriel’s opening remarks from the July 13 Leadership Council Summit are now available.

Among other topics, Gabriel shared his thoughts about WAPA’s near- and long-term future and his expectations for the council leadership.



Read Gabriel’s opening remarks at *myWAPA*, Employee Resources, Reference information, Talking Points from WAPA Leadership, Council Summit 2020 Talking Points.

